SERIES No. 7.

THE MADRAS EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITION, 1907.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR OF BOOKS.
REGISTERED
11 SEP 1907
MADRAS.

A PAPER

ON

Organisation of Elementary Schools

BY

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MADRAS:
PRINTED BY DOWDEN & CO., AT THE "PEERLESS" PRESS.
1907.

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THE ORGANISATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS.

A paper on this subject is a fitting conclusion to the Educational Exhibition and the papers read during the Exhibition.

2. A school may possess an admirably qualified and competent staff; it may be equipped with everything that is required to assist the staff and pupils; it may have ample and most suitable accommodation. But, unless there is a strong and competent hand to direct and control all the work of all the teachers and a watchful eye to note all the details of administration, the school will be a failure. Machinery however well made and however well adapted must constantly be watched and oiled. This central control—this watching and oiling—is what is implied in the term organisation. In a well organised school all the parts of the Educational machinery are carefully arranged and controlled and oiled so as to produce in harmonious co-operation the desired results.

3. The need for such organisation should be, but is not, sufficiently obvious. A year ago the publication of the present Educational rules which require that the Headmaster of a Secondary school should devote the major portion of his time to organisation rather than to teaching drew from many managers of schools the cry "What will a Headmaster do if he does not teach?" In Elementary schools, where the luxury of an organising Headmaster is as yet unknown, the need of a reminder

on this point is even more marked. In the majority of Elementary schools the Headmaster to day is little more than the teacher of the highest class. (Why he should always teach the highest class is a riddle to which there is no answer) And it is more than probable that attempts on his part to check and control the work of his Assistants will be met with decided opposition—either passive or active—on their part.

4. It is unnecessary to attempt to apportion the blame for this position of affairs. But for the sake of coming to a clear understanding for future guidance it is necessary to point out that the previous rules of the Education Department with their rigid and uniform list of requirements and tests and their uncompromising statement of the work to be done in each standard in each school have been to some extent responsible. When the Department tried to organise the work of each school there was some excuse for the school authorities desisting from the task. Now that greater liberty is allowed in these matters and independent adaptation of means to ends together with greater variety of ends is not only allowed but encouraged, it is at once a duty and a pleasure to point out ways in which this increased measure of independence may be made fruitful. This paper is intended to bring about a review by teachers of existing aims and practices and to challenge independent thought on these matters. Uniformity in the details of practice is not desirable and no attempt will here be made to secure it. To quote—with modifications—the recent wise utterances of the English Board of Education "the only uniformity desired is that each manager and teacher should think for himself and work out for himself the salvation of his

school. Freedom implies a corresponding responsibility in its use."

5. Among the English Exhibits of this Exhibition will have been noted several statements by responsible persons (whether County Council or Headmaster or Teachers) of the course of instruction in schools or classes of schools preceded by a statement of the aim and followed by an exposition of the methods adopted to realise that aim. If I were asked the chief point of difference between teachers in English and in Indian schools I should answer that the former, as a general rule, are conscious or try to become conscious of their aim and can state or try to state the methods employed to realise them, while the latter, as a general rule, reply to any query regarding aims and methods by a reference to the Madras educational rules (Edition IV) or to the pages of the Text book which have to be assimilated. I propose to speak first of all therefore of the curriculum and the syllabuses—and, as there is some ambiguity in the use of these terms, it may here be stated that by curriculum I mean the general course of studies adopted in a school and by syllabus the particular course of study (or rather an "abstract" of it) adopted in any particular subject of the school curriculum.

6. *Curriculum*—In determining what subjects are to be taught up to what stage in any particular school the following points obviously require attention:—

(a) The number the qualifications and the capacity of the teachers, I confess that I speak here in defiance of instructions that used to be scattered broad—cast among countless village schools of varying condi-

tions—of the type "object lessons and Geography and Kindergarten should be introduced at once."—or "at least two optional subjects must be introduced." The days of such generic instructions are passing away. With regard to number it is a sound rule perhaps for general guidance that the fewer the teachers the fewer should be the subjects taught. But let it not be forgotten here that such occupations as Drawing from nature memory or flat examples—clay modelling—leaf plaiting etc., etc., under a teacher's general directions, after a good start has been made under his personal guidance, are admirable means for engaging the attention and developing the faculties of the pupils left otherwise unoccupied while the much harassed single teacher is teaching one of his other numerous classes. Whether these should be styled as "separate" subjects is another question. On the other hand it is certain that teachers have hitherto been allowed to waste their time and energies in teaching many subjects requiring their undisturbed attention with insufficient time at their disposal. The main temptation to such a course—results grants for each subject—has now been removed.

The qualifications and capacities of teachers are an even more important factor. Very many teachers who are now devoting separate hours to object lessons for which they possess neither the aptitude nor the necessary stock of knowledge would be more profitably employed in adding time to their reading lessons, where very often more information is more suitably imparted to the pupils regarding the subjects mishandled in these falsely named "object lessons." The same remark is applicable to Geography, Hygiene etc. But let us not be taken in by mere qualifications. There are unpassed teachers who know and can impart more

knowledge about local plants and crops—or who can maintain and use a garden—far better than the certificated teacher of Secondary grade. The wise manager or Headmaster will watch and study most closely his teachers to discover in them latent possibilities.

(*b*) The locality and class of pupils must be considered. The Chery Pariah school in a Kurnool village will not demand the same subjects as the school for Brahmin boys in the Kumbakonam Municipality. Of course there is much that is essential and common to all Elementary schools. But there is also a wide margin of subjects regarding which it may be said that though they would be of possible use in all schools yet they are far less useful in some schools than in others and cannot in those other schools be allowed to overburden the teachers and pupils at the expense of more useful subjects. It is more when the syllabus for each subject is drawn up that the needs of the locality and the wishes of the parents require attention. Parents may be not only ignorant of pedagogic matters but entirely illiterate. At the same time it is on their support that the school depends — and if education means from one point of view the equipment of a boy to earn his own livelihood it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the parent may be able to express a sound opinion on the matter. I am aware that in many cases parents have no wishes beyond the obtaining of a certificate for their children. But their co-operation is a thing for the school organiser to aim at.

7. *The Syllabuses*—When the choice of subjects has been made the next step is to break up each subject into portions which are to be assigned to each

class in the school. This involves three other points for consideration.

A *Determination of the order in which the component parts of each subject are to be treated.* A discussion of this point would involve endless pedagogic details which would be out of place here. The recently published scheme of studies for elementary schools contains suggestions regarding the proper order of treatment of the parts of each subject. As an example of what is implied above it may be pointed out that, whereas in the old course of studies in Arithmetic the Infants and First standard were confined to Addition and Multiplication tables while Multiplication and Division were begun only in the Third standard, it is in the opinion of many educational experts desirable that the four cardinal processes of arithmetic should be taken in close connection with one another from the earliest stages. Geography, Hygiene and Nature study are examples of subjects requiring special attention in this matter. Shall each of these subjects be so divided that each portion is only taken once in the school course—or in such a way that each portion is only taken in its elementary outlines in the lower classes and then once or twice again in greater detail in the higher classes ?.

B. *Determination of the parts in each subject on which special special stress is to be laid and of the parts which may be passed over lightly or even ignored altogether.* In deciding this question attention has to be paid to all the factors noted above as influencing the curriculum. If the subject is Civics and Indian History special stress will have to be laid, especially in the early stages, on stories of famous and distinguished men

or places or buildings well known in the locality, whether in legend or in the affairs of every day life. In Arithmetic ability to calculate in English money may be to great use to pupils of schools in large commercial towns that trade direct with England while it may be useless to the pupils of ordinary village schools. Or again it may be possible to attract to the schools the children of the petty trading classes in villages or towns if special stress is laid on training in indigerous methods of calculation or maintaining accounts. Again in Geography the syllabus in town schools would devote more time to discussion of local and foreign commerce and industries—in village schools to the comparison of local crops and climatic conditions with those prevalent in other places In such matters the wishes of the parents must atleast be considered. It is also essential to consider the length of time that the pupils will be able to spend in the school. In a school where the pupils can only be got to stay for four years many points will have merely to be touched upon that could be developed with considerable detail in schools where boys will spend seven years. The tastes and capacities of teachers must also here be considered. Only let it be remembered that *when once the syllabus has been framed* the teachers must adapt themselves to the syllabus and not the syllabus to themselves. For in the well organised school the individual teacher is only a portion of a very complicated machine and his work must be in relation to the whole course planned for the school.

C. Classification of the pupils—determination of the number of classes and the time to be spent by the pupils in each class. The normal state of things is that

there should be a separate class for each school year with the corollary that the pupil will spend a year in each class. In a very large number of schools, especially in villages—the shortage of teachers or the very small number of pupils in the school renders this impossible. The result is that we find in very many cases only one teacher with five classes trying to solve the problem of being in five places and doing five things at the same time. Usually he gives up the attempt as hopeless and allows a large portion of his pupils to sit idle and with that listless expression which is peculiar to pupils inside but not outside Elementary schools. This is a difficulty that can partly be removed by ingenious framing of the Time table—discussed below. To what extent can it be removed by a wiser system of classification? Many experienced thinkers maintain the general principle, "The fewer the teachers—the fewer should be the number of classes", which may be attractive in theory but is liable when acted upon to result either in the comparative neglect or in the overstraining of the faculties of the younger or less advanced pupils in these large classes. To a large extent—especially in the earlier stages—the work must depend on the age of the pupils.

If the pupils are placed in one or two large classes which are then split up again for work according to age or ability the change introduced is nominal rather than real. On the other hand it is certain that in some subjects (particularly in the higher stages) boys who at present are placed in separate classes could without difficulty study in the same class and follow the same teaching. The aim should be to combine the pupils in large groups for lessons which can be given in common but to grade

them in smaller classes for subjects requiring individual instruction. Those who have watched our present third and fourth standards or again the first and second standards at work will probably agree that in Reading, Writing and Composition, Geography and Elementary science (object lessons) a more comprehensive grouping than that which at present obtains is possible. Arithmetic on the other hand is a subject which could hardly be treated in this way. And a special plea may be made for a separate teacher in all cases for the infants—the earliest stages being of such supreme importance and the desultory teaching at present bestowed therein being so often disastrous in results. The separate classification (for reading, writing, etc.) of boys who are studying different vernaculars in the same school (in several districts Tamil and Telugu are taught in the same school) may also be insisted on more than is at present the case.

The settlement of these preliminaries—order of treatment- selection of important and negligible items—classification—will be followed by the division of subjects among the classes as noted above. It will then be the duty of the individual teachers under the headmaster's supervision to plan out the work alloted to them in each subject with careful reference to the time at their disposal and to see that sufficient time is allowed for the most important parts of the year's work. This plan of the year's work will be written out and kept for reference. At present this step is as a rule omitted and the speed with which the work advances in each subject depends too much on the inclination of the teacher at various times in the year and on the date of the annual inspection. Even the conscientious teacher

is too apt to go blindly forward and to find at the close either that he has finished his work too soon or that a portion remains undone. Consideration of the parts with reference to the whole is the basis of all organisation.

If the Headmaster is to know at any time what progress is being made in the syllabuses of the classes, it is most desirable that each teacher should maintain some kind of record of his work. This does not involve the maintenance of formal "Notes of lessons"—valuable in the Training school and for young teachers but unnecessary for experienced teachers. What is required is that each teacher should note down regularly in a special book what he has taught in each lesson or group of lessons. Very often a word or a word or two will suffice. A summary of the more difficult lessons and a brief account of the methods employed therein should also appear in the record, but here again there is no need as a rule for lengthy notes or a carefully written series of questions and answers demonstrating the whole lesson. Ability to condense this summary without destroying its significance is evidence of a complete mastery of the subject by the teacher, and entails a careful preparation of it beforehand. For such difficult lessons the summary should be written beforehand—with a note entered after the lesson regarding its success or failure. In this same record of work should appear the names of books consulted by the teachers—lists of most common mistakes made by the pupils or points found most difficult by them, etc. Such a record will not merely assist the Headmaster. It will also give more value to the annual inspection where such records may be profitably discussed. The teacher will be able to profit

by the experience of the past year—can apply again what has succeeded and spend more time over what has not been successfully impressed.

The Timetable.—There are certain points to be observed in framing all time tables which are discussed in all books on school organisation and are familiar to and ignored by most teachers. Among these are the provision of frequent breaks—shortening of periods for lower classes—reservation of more difficult subjects for the earlier part of the school day. These need no detailed remarks. There are also countless small points peculiar to each school to be considered when the time table is framed—for example, where several classes are held in one hall it is well to avoid so far as possible giving oral work simultaneously to adjacent classes. Let one be doing drawing, writing work, etc. while the other is reading or reciting. Schools exist where all classes are taught singing of different kinds simultaneously in one hall. The need for a clock in each school also requires emphasis here. However attractive from their picturesqueness may be the methods of village school where the teacher teaches one subject till he gets tired of it and sends away the pupils when the sun sinks low or he himself feels hungry, the effect of such methods on the progress and the health of the pupils is too serious to be overlooked.

A common excuse for the absence of time table is the fact that there is only one teacher. The obvious reply is that the more precious the teacher's time the more carefully must he apportion it.

It is more important here to point out three ways in which defects due to shortage of teachers may be partially remedied by arrangement of the time table.

A. Simultaneous occupation of two or more classes. A time table on the following lines for one day's work in standards IV and III taught by one teacher, is extremely common.

	Period					
Standard	A	B	C	D	E	F
IV	Reading	Object lessons	Geography	Transcription	Arithmetic	Clay modelling.
III	Arithmetic	Geography	Dictation	Clay modelling	Reading	Drawing.

Note that, in this time table, the subjects requiring individual attention and oral teaching on the teacher's part are taken simultaneously in both classes—while the subjects in which the pupils can to some extent work independently after preparatory instructions from the teacher are also taken in both classes in the same periods.

Let the following time table*be contrasted :—

	Period					
Standard	A	B	C	D	E	F
IV	Reading	Composition & Drawing	Arithmetic	Preparation for Geography Lesson	Geography	Clay modelling.
III	Preparation for reading lesson	Reading	Clay modelling and Drawing	Geography	Composition	Arithmetic*

*N.B.-The placing of Arithmetic at the close of the day is not desirable. This would probably be altered if the Time Table for the whole week were framed on the same lines.

[N.B.-It is assumed here that the classes are held in the same room or hall.

Explanatory notes :—In standard IV—Period B—the pupils will reproduce the subject matter of what has been read or will expand or apply it. They will also draw some object or make some diagram connected with the subject matter. In period D they will read in their text book what is to form the subject matter or at least the basis of the following lesson. In period F they will mould a relief map of the locality or Presidency—or will mould a model of an anicut supposing there has been a lesson on irrigation etc. etc.

In standard III—Period A—the pupils will read over (silently) the next reading lesson in their book so that quicker progress may be made during the lesson itself. In period C they will model in clay and draw some object connected with the previous lesson. In period E they will write out a few sentences (whether copied from the black board or from memory or as a free reproduction) summarizing what has been inpressed in the previous lesson.

I have taken perhaps an extreme case—and it might be urged that only a clever teacher could work according to a time table on these lines. It is in any case a fact that there are schools to day where work is proceeding on these principles. What is to be emphasised is the need for making ample provision in schools with inadequate staff for work that will occupy the pupils usefully but will leave the teacher free to attend entirely to another class—work that is connected with previous lesson and may be prescribed at the close ofthat lesson or with a succeeding lesson to which it may be preparatory. At present practically no attention is paid in elementary schools to the value of silent reading and preparation work done in school but without the personal

guidance of the teacher. Any reading that is at present done in schools by the pupils left to themselves is usually a repetition of what has already been read and is performed aloud with the book held upside down. Genuine preparation work is not only valuable as a means of engaging the attention of otherwise unoccupied children. It also encourages independent effort on the pupils' part. The present methods which involve the constant attention and assistance of the teacher at every point had a weakening effect on both the moral and intellectual side and are largely responsible for the illiteracy into which many expupils of school relapse. That drawing and modelling etc. are useful not only to train the hand and eye but because they can be done without the close personal supervision of the teacher (though the work as a rule is better if personally supervised) is sufficiently obvious. The principle of correlation has not only an intrinsic pedagogic value but also the advantage of enabling the teacher to set the next lesson with the prospect of his instructions being intelligible and interesting to the pupils.

B. The holding of "half day" schools which has been much resorted to in European countries is now permissible under the educational rules. By this term is here meant the holding of school in the morning for some of the classes and in the afternoon for other classes of the same school—the teaching being carried on by the same teacher or teachers in both morning and afternoon. There are obvious objections to the procedure which is as a matter of fact being gradually abandoned in countries where the supply of teachers grows more rapidly than the number of schools. But there are equally obvious advantages in cases where

it is really impossible to secure an adequate staff. Where a teacher attends to two classes for three hours in the morning and to two other classes for three hours in the afternoon there is likely to be more profit to the pupils and less strain to the teacher than in schools where he has to try to teach the four classes for six hours in the day. The chief objection to the scheme in this country is that parents value a school in proportion to the time during which it relieves them of the care of their children. They wish to get their money's worth and estimate it by quantity rather than by quality. This is the real reason for retaining the unhappy infants in most schools for at least six hours every day. The parents' wishes might perhaps be considered to this extent that the pupils taught in the morning might be allowed to return to school in the afternoon to amuse themselves in any way that could not interfere with the work of the other classes. In the case of schools for depressed or backward classes it can safely be asserted that an arrangement such as has been proposed above would be welcome, since it would enable the pupils to attend also to those out of school occupations by which they help to support themselves and their parents. In the case of many Muhammadan pupils whose secular education is at present often deferred till they have undergone a course of religious training it might be possible to ensure an earlier start in secular education if it were confined, in the earlier stages, to a very few hours in the day duly subordinated to the religious instruction. And here it may be added—though it is a digression from the main subject of this paragraph—that cooperation between managers of different schools would often render more profitable the instruction given in both and remove the defects due to

shortage of teachers. To take a concrete example—a village contains two schools—each school contains 35 pupils divided into four standards taught by one teacher. A partial amalgamation by which the two lower standards could be taught in one school and the two higher in the other school—the profits being equally divided without reference to any difference in fees for the various classes—could hardly fail to be profitable. It might be urged that to the teacher of the lower classes would justly fall a smaller share of the profits and that the plan is therefore impracticable. The objection is justified by the present absurd practice of charging fees according to the pupil's class but does not rest on sound pedagogic grounds.

Assignment of work to individual teachers. It is usually the practice in elementary schools to allot one class to each teacher and to make him entirely responsible for it. If all the teachers are competent and experienced this practice is laudable for disciplinary reasons and unobjectionable from every point of view. But the employment in many schools of teachers who are totally inexperienced and untrained or who are far below the level of the rest of the staff will often entail a departure from this procedure. It is not in the interest of such teachers or of the pupils to place one class entirely under their charge. The lowest classes should in particular be rescued from them. At present the worst and lowest paid teachers are left in sole charge of the lowest classes partly because their stock of information is not great enough to enable them to teach the higher classes, and partly because the pupils in these classes are not able to raise the protest against such treatment that would often be raised by those of

the higher classes. With regard to entirely ignorant teachers it is impossible to say anything. To teachers whose defects are due mainly to lack of experience or training there is surely a great deal of more or less mechanical work—or at any rate work of a minor order of importance in the various classes that may properly be left. This warning is also necessary in the case of monitors (pupil teachers they might be called)—the ex-pupils of the school to whom at present is entrusted so often the work of "teaching the infant class". Such monitors have a real value when they are put to keep order in a class left by the teacher to prepare a lesson or perform some manual occupation. They can also relieve the teacher of much correction work.

Examinations:—At present one of the most common ways of testing what is called, for politeness, the "organisation" of a school is by calling for the register of marks and examinations. It is more than doubtful whether marks and formal periodical examinations of pupils have much value in an elementary school. It is the teachers rather than the pupils who require systematic and periodic testing. That the pupils of the higher classes should be tested from time to time by some one other than their regular teacher is obvious. But such testing should be mainly if not entirely oral and should involve no special preparation or previous strain on the pupils' part and should therefore be without previous notice. The youngest pupils should never be formally examined. Scrutiny of the teacher's record of work and methods and careful observation of the pupils during class hours will be all that is needed by the most vigilant Headmaster. The teacher who has many pupils under his instruction will do well to keep some written record of the progress of the more backward pupils.

Punctuality and regular attendance:—These essential factors in the welfare of school depend to a large extent on the parent but also to a large extent on the school organisation. Marking of attendance at the beginning not the close of the morning and afternoon—opening of a school with a general assembly or some ceremony—a set of definite rules regarding applications for leave of absence and penalties for absence without leave—refusal to promote irregular boys—award of prizes (however small) for regular attendance—are much neglected means of aiming at improvement in these respects.

Attention to physical welfare of pupils:—I will not here trespass on the preserves of another lecturer but cannot refrain from observing that the organisation of each school should, but rarely does, include provision for daily scrutiny of pupils with reference to cleanliness of body and dress. The arrangement and the kind of school furniture must also be considered by the organiser in this connection. Where boys write standing up with book or slate slanting and futher from one eye than the other—with the light on their faces or where they sit huddled on high backless benches or at desks made for college students, the organisation has been defective. Where they sit, for reading, with feet firmly planted on the ground and where they sit on the ground for manual work and drawing and writing with low tables or slightly raised planks in front of them (seats with desks or tables in front are good if there is enough money but are not essential)—there we can see signs of the organiser who is not content with what has been or still is customary in most schools but aims at improvement in every detail.

It is unnecessary to prolong a paper already of excessive length by further citing of evidence of the need for organisation. In conclusion it may again be pointed out that the aim of this paper is to show this need for more organisation and to challenge independent thought regarding ways and means of organisation rather than to dogmatise regarding those ways and means. If at times the statements have appeared aggressively dogmatic it is due to lack of space for qualifying words and phrases rather than to a feeling of certainty on the writer's part.

Many may think that the paper contains only what obvious to all and attainable by none. The writer's own experience leads him to believe that to many teachers and managers the need for organisation has not been obvious in the past and to hope that in many schools the work of organisation will not be found impracticable in the future.

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